



April 2006

AWIN Monthly Newsletter

User group meetings

Tuesday May 2nd -
Monticello Fire Dept
Training Facility @
9:00 am 1665 Hwy
278 East

Wednesday May 3rd
- Arkadelphia Town
Hall @ 9:00 am 700
Clay St

Thursday May 4th -
First Service Bank
Clinton @ 9:00 am
486 Hwy 65 N

Tuesday May 9th -
Yell County Training
Center @ 9:00 am 106
Union Street

Wednesday May
10th - Brinkley
Convention Center @
9:00 am 1501
Weatherby Drive

AWIN Support

In partnership with the Arkansas State Police, the Department of Information Systems (DIS) operates the AWIN Call Center to support all AWIN subscribers (radio users) with technical assistance or AWIN-related requests. Technicians are on call in the event of any emergency. Call (501) 682-HELP (682-4357) or toll-free (800) 435-7989 or e-mail:

awin.support@arkansas.gov

The DIS professionals who provide support for AWIN have fielded 182 customer requests to date.

SAFECOM industry summit

AWIN project managers attended the SAFECOM Conference in Washington D.C. earlier this month. The one day workshop was sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate's SAFECOM program. The summit offered information about policies specific to interoperable communications, and provided first responders an opportunity to work with communications equipment manufacturers to understand requirements for interoperable communications. The purpose of the SAFECOM organization is to provide guidance, tools and templates that lead to interoperability. The organization believes that interoperable solutions should be practitioner driven, rather than manufacturer driven.

Some key topics covered at the summit included public safety requirements, communications plans and funding. Local government officials are concerned with the safety of the citizens in their communities, but also need to ensure the safety of first responders. This would include the need for funding for first responder equipment.

Communications plans need to be in place prior to an emergency situation. During Hurricane Katrina public safety agencies discovered that several counties were trying to use the same ITAC Channels, causing congestion on the system. Command and Control structure must also be in place before an emergency. Practitioners must know to use common language. The current thought process is that communica-

tions plans are being created by the Federal Government in which state leadership and local first responders will use as a guideline, but it was pointed out that plans need to be developed from the local level and pushed up. Agencies must have operability before they achieve interoperability. Currently, the New Orleans metro area is developing a communication plan to better respond during an emergency, and when the plan is developed it will tie into a statewide plan. Interoperability issues are more people related than technology related; 90% coordination and 10% technology.

There must be a standard for communication systems. Interoperable systems must be open systems, not proprietary. This would require vendors to provide universal batteries, universal master control systems, and universal portable radios. Also, programming the radios must be simplified and they must have full functionality across manufacturers. There is a need to integrate standards based mobile data systems.

Lastly, attendees discussed policy and funding efforts for interoperability. Interoperability is being demanded by Congress and the executive level of government. There is a clear emphasis on accelerating interoperable communications, as state plans are being tied to grants and funding. The State of Kentucky has created a competitive grant process, and has appropriate funding for maintenance of the statewide system.

Assuring a safer America through
effective public safety communications



Request for federal dollars

The AWIN management team recently submitted requests for federal funds to the Arkansas congressional delegation. These are additional funds which can be used to enhance and expand the current AWIN system. The formal written request for funding was followed by personal contact with delegates to provide project status information and to answer any questions about AWIN.

One request was submitted to add five additional tower sites to the AWIN system. These additions would further decrease the number of “dead-spots” encountered by users. Selection of new tower sites would be based on a combination of covering the greatest number of potential users, areas with poor coverage, and attempting to fairly deploy new sites to all regions of the state.

Funding to increase capacity on busier tower sites

was requested. This request will allow the state to deploy bridging technology around the state. The equipment provides the ability to interconnect two disparate radio systems together on a temporary basis, further enhancing interoperability capabilities between two or more agencies.

The final request includes the purchase of a mobile command unit and/or a portable Cell on Wheels (COW). The unit would further enhance the abilities of various agencies involved in resource-coordination and deployment. The COW can be used to temporarily replace a destroyed site and to further enhance radio coverage in areas when a specific incident dictates more intense coverage. Thank you to our state congressional delegation for the continuing support each provides to public-safety and public-service personnel who serve the citizens of Arkansas.

Transfer of operations

AWIN program managers and engineers are preparing for the transfer of all AWIN operations to the State of Arkansas. The state will soon be ultimately responsible for AWIN system management. Several individual areas are being addressed to ensure a smooth conversion.

System management equipment has been installed and is in use at the Department of Information Systems (DIS). Documentation of processes and policies is complete. End user training has been completed, and radio installations are nearing com-

pletion for Arkansas State Police (ASP) and Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness (CSEPP) system users.

AWIN engineers have recently visited all infrastructure sites and developed punch lists for unresolved issues. Assignments and responsibilities have been identified for items included in the punch lists. Performance testing of the system has been successfully performed. A “lessons learned” session for the project is scheduled during the month of May.



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Send us your story: Do you have a story you would like to share with other end users? Any advice you want to pass along to agencies that are awaiting a cutover in their area? We want to know how AWIN is working for you! Please send your comments to awin@arkansas.gov.